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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: SEPTEMBER 28, 2009

Summary: Almost all major Pakistani newspapers re-ran British daily 'The Sunday Times' report that the "U.S. is threatening to launch airstrikes on Mullah Omar and the Taliban leadership in Quetta." Pegged to this news piece was Interior Minister Malik's statement that the "Americans have never told us any location and we need real-time intelligence to take action." Reports and photographs of the much-awaited meeting between Pakistani and Indian foreign ministers on the sidelines of the UNGA summit in New York that "concluded without a major breakthrough on composite dialogue" received extensive media coverage. All newspapers also highlighted reports that "people started leaving South Waziristan Agency fearing military operation." The English language daily, "Dawn," reported that U.S. Defense Secretary Gates "denied" any rift between the U.S. military and the White House over the Afghanistan war. Some newspapers in their Sunday editions reported that the "U.S. condemned the terrorist suicide attacks in Bannu and Peshawar," and reiterated its "support to the Government of Pakistan in its struggle against those who commit heinous acts of violence against the civilian population of the country."

Several newspapers continued to run critical editorials on the pros and cons of the Kerry-Lugar bill and the strings attached to the U.S. aid for Pakistan. Commenting on a "new kind of relationship with Washington" the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News," maintained that the "money they pour in must not allow them to assume the role of masters. The equation must be a more equitable one." The Second largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" termed the Kerry-Lugar bill's conditions as "shameful and contrary to Pakistan's independence, sovereignty and security." Likewise, the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain," also urged the government to "reject the conditions linked to the proposed U.S. aid." End Summary.

News Stories

"U.S. Has Good Mind To Bomb Quetta: U.K. Paper" "The News" (09/28)

"The United States is threatening to launch air strikes on Mullah Omar and the Taliban leadership in Quetta as frustration mounts about the ease with which they (allegedly) find sanctuary across the border from Afghanistan, reports 'The Sunday Times.'... The Pakistani government is reluctant to take its own action, however. 'We need real-time intelligence,' said Interior Minister Rehman Malik. 'TQericans have never told us any location.'"

"India Declines To Fix Date For Resumption Of Dialogue" "Dawn"

(09/28)

"After extensive, two-hour talks at New York's Palace Hotel, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his Indian counterpart S.M. Krishna admitted that the two sides failed to fix a date for the resumption of dialogue suspended after the Mumbai attacks."

"Resume Dialogue, Qureshi Tells India" "The News" (09/28)

"Emphasizing that 'dialogue is the most sensible and the only way forward' for improvement in Pakistan-India relations, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Sunday asked India to resume the dialogue process. He described talks with his Indian counterpart S.M. Krishna as 'frank, positive and honest.'"

"People Start Leaving SWA Fearing Military Action" "The News" (09/28)

"Following an announcement by the Fata Radio Razmak on Saturday night in which the political administration of South Waziristan asked the tribal people to vacate four towns, including Makeen, Push Ziarat, Spin Kamar and Tabay, the population started migrating to safer places."

"Gates Says No Rift Among Leaders Over Afghan war" "Dawn" (09/28)

"Defence Secretary Robert Gates denied on Sunday any rift between the U.S. military and the White House over the war in Afghanistan and suggested a possible radical shift in strategy was unlikely, Mr. Gates told ABC television."

"U.S. Condemns Terrorist Attacks In Bannu And Peshawar" "Daily times," "The Post" (09/27)

"Today's terrorist attacks in Peshawar and Bannu serve as a reminder that extremism still poses a threat to the people of Pakistan. We will continue to support the Government of Pakistan in its struggle against those who commit heinous acts of violence against the civilian population of Pakistan and the officials whose job it is to protect them, the U.S. Embassy statement said."

"Desperate Taliban Deliver Death 18 Killed In Peshawar, Bannu Car Blasts" "The News" (09/27)

"Barbaric terrorists struck twice within hours in separate car bombings which claimed at least 18 lives and hurt over 160 in Peshawar and Bannu on Saturday."

"NWFP Blasts Show Taliban's Ability To Strike" "Daily Times" (09/28)

"The suicide blasts that rocked NWFP and FATA over the weekend signal the Taliban remain a threat despite intensified military operations and unmanned drone attacks targeting the group's leaders, said analysts on Sunday."

"Death Toll Rises To 27 In Peshawar, Bannu Attacks" "Dawn" (09/28)

"The death from two suicide bomb attacks in Pakistan rose to 27 on Sunday. A suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden truck into a police station in the town of Bannu, the gateway to the North Waziristan militant region on the Afghan border, early on Saturday. Pakistani Taliban militants claimed responsibility for both blasts and vowed more."

"16 Terrorists Arrested, Four Surrender" "Dawn" (09/28)

"Security forces have detained 16 terrorists, including two 'commanders' in various areas of Swat and Malakand. Four other terrorists had surrendered voluntarily, an ISPR press release said on Sunday."

"Houses Of Four Militants Blown Up In Malakand" "Dawn" (09/28)

"Security forces dynamited four houses of suspected militants in Alladhand village during a search operation in different areas of Malakand on Sunday."

"Orders Issued To Stop Demolition Of Militants' Houses" "The News" (09/28)

"The military authorities have issued orders to the Pakistan Army commanders operating in Swat and the rest of Malakand Division to stop demolishing houses of people suspected of having links with the Taliban militants. Requesting anonymity, a senior Army officer told 'The News' that the decision was taken due to complaints that the houses in many cases were jointly owned and the whole families suffered instead of only the suspected militants being targeted."

"11 Arrested In Fresh Buner Offensive" "Dawn" (09/28)

"Security forces arrested 11 suspects on Sunday during a fresh offensive against militants in the mountainous areas of district Buner, bordering Swat, sources said."

"All Mehsuds Are Not Militants, Says Jirga" "Dawn" (09/28)

"A Jirga of the Mehsud tribe of South Waziristan has urged the government to avoid taking indiscriminate action against the tribe, saying that all the Mehsuds are not militants."

"Militants, Some Posing As FC Soldiers, Held In Darra" "Dawn" (09/28)

"Security forces arrested 24 suspected militants, three of them wearing uniforms of Frontier Corps, during a search operation in Darra Adamkhel on Sunday."

"Terror War Inflicts \$400m Loss On Tourism" "Dawn" (09/28)

"Tourism industry of Frontier province suffered a loss worth \$400 million since the launch of war on terror, said NWFP Tourism Minister Syed Aqil Shah in Peshawar on Sunday."

"Merge FATA Into NWFP Or Make It province: HRCP" "The News" (09/28)

"A recent publication of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has suggested that after consultation with the residents of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the Parliament should merge FATA into the NWFP or give it an independent status as province."

"Pakistan's Concerns Addressed In Aid Bill, Says Farhat" "Dawn" (09/28)

"Pakistan's concerns that attaching conditions to U.S. aid will be counter-productive have been accommodated in the Kerry-Lugar bill, presidential spokesman Farhatullah Babar said on Saturday. 'Our reservations have not been ignored,' said Mr. Babar while briefing journalists in New York."

"Feel-Good Factor In U.S. Aid" "Dawn" (09/28)

"Much of the corporate Pakistan is thrilled by the passage of Biden-Lugar Bill in the U.S. Senate and the move to create a trust fund to finance the country's needs. The capital inflow, many believe, would help the economy to recover."

"Resolution On Nuclear Disarmament Welcomed" "Dawn" (09/28)

"Pakistan has described as a significant step the UN Security Council resolution that seeks to rid the planet of nuclear weapons. Talking to Voice of America, Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit said Pakistan always supported efforts meant for global peace and stability and had adopted a balanced and principled approach on disarmament."

Editorials/Op-eds

"A New Beginning," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (09/28)

"It is now quite clear the U.S. will remain engaged in Pakistan for some time to come. The significant aid packages that have been

announced mean that there is no possibility of a swift pull out from the region.... Islamabad meanwhile must also find ways to lay down the blueprint for a new kind of relationship with Washington. The money they pour in must not allow them to assume the role of masters. The equation must be a more equitable one. The challenge for Pakistan is to find a way to make this possible and set the necessary wheels in motion to drive towards this goal."

"Shameful Conditions For Pakistan In The Kerry-Lugar," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (09/08)

"According to newspaper reports, Pakistan will have to meet such conditions under the Kerry-Lugar Bill that are contrary to our independence, sovereignty and security.... There is an infrastructure being erected under Robin Raphel's leadership for the implementation of these conditions and the nation has already reacted to it. The nation would never accept if the government of Pakistan agreed to half-yearly shameful certification by U.S. Secretary of State for the acquisition of the aid.... The government should reject the bill while all the politicians, including Mian Nawaz Sharif and religious parties, should raise their voices against it."

"Kerry-Lugar Bill," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (09/28)

"If Pakistan fails to meet even one condition out of the many included in the Kerry-Lugar bill, the U.S. would have the right to stop the tranche and deprive Pakistan of this aid. Pakistan should reject these shameful conditions which go against our national dignity. By accepting these conditions, Pakistan would almost turn into a U.S. colony whose policies would be determined and monitored by the U.S, and the Pakistani government would be left hanging like a lifeless limb."

"Kerry-Lugar Bill: Unpleasant Conditions," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 10,000) (09/28)

"The condition demanding non-interference by the three armed forces in political and judicial matters is beyond the average Pakistani's comprehension. This obviously means that by giving peanuts to Pakistan every year, the U.S. wants to subjugate all state institutions.... To make matters worse, the U.S. is threatening to stop aid if all these conditions are not met."

"Conditions Tied To U.S. Assistance" an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (09/28)

"Anxiety over the conditions in the Kerry-Lugar Bill is a natural reaction, but some of the conditions cannot, in principle, be described as wrong; for example, the assistance will stop in the event of army or intelligence agencies interference in the political and judicial process.... However, dialogue is a better option than coming up with conditions when it's a matter of relations between two nations."

"FoDP," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/28)

"The Friends of Democratic Pakistan have not helped Pakistan so much as done the American bidding, by creating a Multi Donor Trust Fund, or MDTF.... In this way, the central government will not be able to determine how the money is spent there, and thus will have that funding determined by the MDTF. The MDTF will be administered by the World Bank based in Pakistan, not the Pakistani Finance Ministry.... This is very clearly an example of those who are contributing to the MDTF having bought into the rhetoric, which portrays Pakistan as one of those irresponsible countries, which cannot be trusted with money.... However, the Pakistan government should realize that by accepting the money on these terms, it has more or less admitted the charge.... The FoDP are not true friends, and should be made to respect Pakistan's national sovereignty by putting the money they promised in the hands of Pakistani institutions, or not making the money available at all."

"Taliban Hit Back In NWFP," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (09/28)

"The latest incursion into the NWFP territory is supposed to be a message to the ANP government in Peshawar that the TTP is still strong and controls the cities of the province.... What, however, cannot be missed is the TTP's realization that they could be confronted with an army advancing into their strongholds in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The ANP leaders have spread the word that this attack is imminent. Clearly, the terrorists are on the run in the most populated two areas, Malakand and Bajaur.... The cards have to be played very carefully from now on. The army cannot afford to weaken its presence in Malakand if that is what will happen when it moves troops into South Waziristan."

"Is Aid The Answer?," an op-ed by Dr. Sania Nishtar in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (09/28)

"There are other things that both sides can do to improve aid effectiveness. The Pakistani government should strengthen fiduciary systems and prioritize, transparency-building measures, a call for which has been renewed in the tabling of Transparency International's recent reports. The Friends, on the other hand, must be sensitive to connotations of conditionality, refrain from using regional unified approaches to policy such as Af-Pak.... "

"A New Document of Slavery," an op-ed by Hamid Mir in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (09/28)

"In fact, three U.S. private security agencies including the infamous Blackwater, which has changed its name, are operating in Pakistan. It appears that the Americans working in Islamabad are equating Pakistan with the war-ravaged Afghanistan and consider themselves above all laws of this country. They consider that, as in Kabul, they can also roam this city while brandishing and touting their sophisticated weapons. But they are committing a blunder of far-reaching dimensions in this regard. Here, in Pakistan, there does not exist any 'Northern Alliance' to welcome the U.S. forces, nor has the UN passed any resolution for a military intervention in this country. The suspicious activities of the Americans in Islamabad are creating unrest among the local residents which may prove detrimental to the U.S. interests as well as to the democratic dispensation in Pakistan, which has just been snared with the Kerry-Lugar bill. An ordinary Pakistani considers that the U.S. policies are becoming a potential threat to the security of his or her country. They are not against friendly ties with Washington but they cannot accept the U.S. slavery at any cost. The Kerry-Lugar bill is a document of slavery, not of friendship, hence Pakistan's Parliament should reject it."

"Interesting Times," an op-ed by Syed Manzoor Hussain in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (09/28)

"Whether the U.S. decides to finish the campaign against the Taliban or make some sort of deal, declare victory and leave, it will, for the foreseeable future, need the Pakistan Army to prevent the Taliban from using Pakistani territory to mount attacks against U.S. and allied troops in Afghanistan. It will also require some form of commitment from the Pakistani government that it will not actively try to destabilize the Karzai government after the U.S. leaves. So, it might seem that considering U.S. needs in Afghanistan, Pakistan is in a 'win-win' situation. But it should also be remembered that even though the Taliban are now unpopular, the U.S. is at this time also about equally unpopular in Pakistan. That puts the Pakistani government as well as the army in a delicate situation.... It is therefore important for the government, the army as well as members of the responsible media to present to the people the point that by helping the U.S. at this time, Pakistan will accomplish three important goals. First, improve its economic situation, second have a better chance at successfully fighting against the extremist threats to the country, and third, most importantly, facilitate an early departure of the U.S. from the area."

"Obama's Afghan Dilemma," an op-ed by Shahzad Chaudhry in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (09/28)

"President Obama is right - eliminate Al Qaeda as your main military mission. Additionally, use available resources to facilitate an environment of stability by neutralizing the real bad elements, not by alienating the largest segment of the Afghan population; mainstream the majority Afghan Taliban into a participatory process of nation-building.... One thing though should be expressly clear: there is no military victory in Afghanistan. Success will be in leaving behind a stable Afghanistan minus Al Qaeda, but not minus what time has begun to define as the Taliban. These so called 'Afghan Taliban' are but a creation of an environment, who found impetus when clubbed into the same corner as Al Qaeda. Minus Al Qaeda, they would settle down into their alternative options. That shall certainly have a salutary effect on stabilizing Pakistan's troubled regions."

"India's Militarism," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/28)

"With India upping its military ante against Pakistan in terms of conventional weapons, the intent is clearly to keep Pakistan's military focused on the eastern front. After all, unless the Pakistan military is suicidal, it cannot move the bulk of its fighting force to the western front or into FATA as the U.S. would like. Which makes one wonder why the U.S. would indulge India's resurgent militarism by giving in to its weapons wish list? Or does the U.S. deliberately want to make us vulnerable on the eastern front? The Pakistan military should explore these questions in depth before continuing its cooperation with the U.S. in its 'war on terror.'"

"India's Orchestrated Pak Bashing," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (09/28)

"The statement by the Indian Prime Minister on the side lines of the G-20 summit in Pittsburgh is in line with New Delhi's decades old policy of blaming Pakistan at international forums.... From the statement of the Indian leader it should be clear to those powers that wanted to see resumption of dialogue between the two countries that New Delhi has its own agenda of Pakistan bashing rather than addressing key issues that confront the two South Asian neighbors."

"Iran's Intentions," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (09/28)

"Iran's disclosure about its upcoming uranium enrichment facility has expectedly upset the U.S. and its western allies.... Iran believes it has done nothing wrong and insists that its uranium enrichment will not be of weapons grade. Resorting to a lot of hair-splitting arguments, the West has been strongly critical of Iran and called for stronger sanctions.... A lot will now depend on the degree to which Iran is prepared to cooperate with the IAEA inspectors who alone can reassure the U.S. and the others about Iranian motives."

"Nuclear Double Standards," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (09/28)

"The West's concerns over Iran's nuclear program are understandable. However, the double standards employed by the international community on the issue needs to be taken up. The United States' uneven approach in dealing with the issue of nuclear proliferation in the region is amply reflected in its turning a blind eye to Israel's nuclear program and its belligerent posture vis-à-vis Iran.... There is weight in the argument that if Iran is pushed against the wall, it may go nuclear, resulting in nuclear proliferation in the entire region and beyond. Aggressive posture, be it from the U.S. or Iran, is bound to push the region into chaos and disaster."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson